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PRESS RELEASE

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CDC Study Finds U.S. Schools Making Progress in Decreasing Availability of Junk Food and Promoting Physical Activity

However, More Progress Needed to Foster Health and Wellness of Students

The nation's schools have made considerable improvements in their policies and programs to promote the health and safety of students, particularly in the areas of nutrition, physical activity and tobacco use, says a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, more needs to be done to strengthen school health and wellness policies and programs, according to CDC.

The School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS) 2006, conducted by CDC and published in the October 2007 issue of the *Journal of School Health*, is the largest and most comprehensive study of health policies and programs in the nation's schools. Previous SHPPS were conducted in 1994 and 2000.

"Since the release of the previous SHPPS in 2000, America's schools have made significant progress in removing junk food, offering more physical activity opportunities, and establishing policies that prohibit tobacco use," said CDC Director Julie L. Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H. "Our goal with this report is to provide health and education officials with useful information that will help them develop and improve programs that can have significant benefit for our school-aged children."

Major findings include:

- States prohibiting schools from offering junk foods in vending machines increased from 8 percent in 2000 to 32 percent in 2006, and the percentage of school districts doing so increased from 4 percent to 30 percent.
- Schools selling water in vending machines or school stores increased from 30 percent in 2000 to 46 percent in 2006.
- States that required elementary schools to provide students with regularly scheduled recess increased from 4 percent in 2000 to 12 percent in 2006 and the percentage of school districts with this requirement increased from 46 percent to 57 percent.
- Schools with policies that prohibited all tobacco use in all school locations, including off-campus school-sponsored events, increased from 46 percent in 2000 to 64 percent in 2006.

- Schools that sold cookies, cake, or other high-fat baked goods in vending machines or school stores decreased from 38 percent in 2000 to 25 percent in 2006.
- Schools that offered salads a la carte increased from 53 percent in 2000 to 73 percent in 2006.
- The percentage of schools that offered deep fried potatoes (French fries) a la carte decreased from 40 percent to 19 percent.

The 2006 SHPPS also identified several areas that need improvement including:

- Seventy-seven percent of high schools still sell soda or fruit drinks that are not 100 percent juice, and 61 percent sell salty snacks not low in fat in their vending machines or school stores.
- Only 4 percent of elementary schools, 8 percent of middle schools, and 2 percent of high schools provided daily physical education or its equivalent for the entire school year for students in all grades.
- Overall, 22 percent of schools did not require students to take any physical education.
- Currently, 36 percent of schools still do not have policies prohibiting tobacco use in all locations at all times.

“If we want to build on the improvements that schools have made over the past six years, we need to involve many people and programs,” said Howell Wechsler, Ed.D., M.P.H., director of CDC’s Division of Adolescent and School Health. “Families, schools, school boards, and school administrators all need to work together to develop and implement policies and programs that promote health and safety among our nation’s young people.”

SHPPS is a national survey conducted every six years to assess school health policies and programs at the state, district, school, and classroom levels. For more information about SHPPS 2006, including fact sheets that summarize study highlights and a summary of state education agency policies, visit www.cdc.gov/SHPPS.

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